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Dances Without Wiggling Her Feet

Ruth St. Denis Had a Brain Besides Nimble Toes and She Turned Her \$25 a Week Job Into One That Brought Her Money and Fame—Places Her Art Alongside Music and Sculpture.



If you saw a beautiful woman sitting on the floor with her feet crossed and wearing a sad smile you wouldn't call that dancing, would you?

It's a long way from the tango, anyway, and there is nothing from South America that looks like that. Yet Ruth St. Denis calls that dancing.

Not that Ruth hasn't a nimble set of toes and feet. Quite the contrary. Ruth St. Denis can dance so fast that it is difficult to follow her graceful movements, but she is several kinds of a dancer. She can dance in English, Spanish, French, German, Italian, Egyptian, Japanese, Hindu and Sanskrit.

Further than that she can dance with her toes, her feet, her fingers, her body and then she can dance without dancing at all. She calls that last kind of dancing the soul dance. She learned it in India and is now showing Americans how to dance while sitting on the floor.

"When I sit motionless, as the Hindu idol Vishu, I am dancing," she asserts. "The impression is mental. I send out what might be called vibrations which are felt by the audience. As the imagination of the dancer expresses itself in

movement, an impression is made on the brain, and then the imagination, enriched by the experience of the movement, is able to realize itself even when the dancer remains motionless."

All dreadfully involved, but in Germany Jacques Dalcroze is running a school on these principles. The science is called eurythmy and goes back at least as far as Plato, whose words are quoted to the effect that "It is through the physical body that eurythmy—the expression of the symmetry hidden within the soul—is awakened into being and it is by the 'dance gymnastics' that reactive harmony of soul and body is attained."

Miss St. Denis is going abroad at her first opportunity to see Mr. Dalcroze, whose views are strikingly in accord with her own. He is quoted as saying: "Many who are well acquainted with the rhythm of music, painting, poetry and prose have yet to realize the extreme value of rhythm in life. Music may still be the privilege of the few, but rhythm will be the joy of the many. The different arts will become united by a general feeling for rhythm which at the same time will form the link between art and or-

inary life. It was the privilege of the last century to make full use of science; it will, we hope, be the privilege of this century to make full use of art."

RHYTHM IS ABSENCE OF ALL FRICTION.

Again Dalcroze says rhythm is the absence of friction, mental and physical. Neurasthenia, he declares, is nothing more than a lack of balance between mental and physical powers, a lack of rhythm, a nervous strain produced by mental excitement when it is denied bodily expression.

Ruth St. Denis says we are just beginning to learn about dancing.

"The world knows less about dancing today than it knew about electricity before Benjamin Franklin's time," she says. The poor old world has to admit she is telling the truth because who could dispute St. Denis. Not so very long ago the world thought it knew a great deal about dancing. Dancing is as old as the human race. What the civilized world did not know about dancing was known to the savages.

Down in South America they were dancing the tango years ago and doubtless the Mt. Everest Hop, so popular now in Tibet, will some day become popular at Newport. Some one in the world knows something about dancing and all the somethings added together



make a total sum of knowledge about the art, we are prone to believe. But Ruth St. Denis says not. When one speaks to her of dancing she says, "My Art." She is the only one perfect in the art. The rest of the crowd of perfect ones are simply perfect in their own art.

"But the world will learn," says St. Denis. "My art is the kindred art of music. It is the kindred art of sculpture. It is the kindred art of painting and it stands equal to poetry. These other arts have been

RUTH ST. DENIS in various poses. The central pose is the Hindu Soul Dance.

brought to perfection. Poetry has been the subject of great thought for ages. The greatest minds of the earth have helped develop poetry. Homer, Virgil, Shakespeare, Milton and all the rest have striven toward the ideal in poetry. They have given their lives to its development and have made it perfect.

"The ancients have worked long and hard at sculpture. After the close of the middle ages modern men have striven to perfect sculpture and today men are still toiling and gaining perfection in sculpture. Music at first was only an outburst. It was far from perfect. How could they gain perfection?"

"Then came the master minds and we have attained perfection in music. Music is a wonderful art. So is painting a wonderful art, but none the less is dancing."

Dancing is classed by Ruth St. Denis as the Cinderella of the arts. While the more favored sisters were being patted on the head and led on to greater perfection dancing has been shoved out in the back shed and made to look shabby. But some of these days the Cinderella is going to get a chance to go to the king's ball in her true colors. Then her sisters will have to look to their laurels, for dancing will de-

mand her rights and if she does not demand them she will get them without demanding.

Miss St. Denis is another fairy godmother rescuing the art of dancing from the house of neglect. That is what she modestly says and her press agents have not denied it.

ST. DENIS OBTAINED IDEA FROM CIGARETTE POSTER.

Ruth St. Denis was not always famous. She was not always drawing a fortune a week dancing before enormous crowds. The fact is that once upon a time just like in the story of Cinderella she was unknown, unloved and drawing \$25 a week. That was a good many years ago when she got a job from Mr. Belasco as a minor actress. Some weeks Belasco couldn't use her and she had to remain at her home in New York wondering how in the world she was going to live on nothing a week.

Then came the cigarette poster. An humble artist trying to grab a living from the lovers of art in New York painted a daughter of Egypt for a poster and sold the poster to a manufacturer of cigarettes. Small pictures were made from the big poster and pasted on cigarette boxes. Later they were printed right on the box and they gained great circulation. Looking at the picture of the Egyptian one afternoon an idea struck Ruth St. Denis right straight between the eyes.

"Wow!" said Ruth. In just about seven weeks she was drawing \$2,000 a week. She had a press agent all of her own and was heralded as the newest dancer and the classiest of them all. She had gotten the idea of dancing from the poster and it was a great idea. Everybody in New

York liked it fine, and it soon spread all over the country and people with \$2, \$3 and some of them with \$10 bought seats to see the woman who could do all the little fancy turns and twists of the body.

Then she went abroad to study. Miss St. Denis is much taken with Japanese dancing. She says it is lovely. She says it is divine.

Now, Ruth St. Denis is not the real name of the dancer. That is simply the name she goes by. Parents often do not donate their children with those lovely names they

would like to have. Parents often have some ordinary name like Smith or Jones or Brown. Some of them have such names as Snacks or Schubach. Parents are so inconsiderate. When Ruth found she was famous or about to be famous, she abandoned the name her folks gave her. It has been so long since she used that old name her associates do not know what her real name is. She speaks it so seldom she hardly knows the name herself.

But what is the difference anyway. Everyone knows her as Miss St. Denis and that is all a stage woman wants. She wants a name that everybody will call her by. She wants a name that will look well in print and one that will be short enough to get in the head lines.

Now if you had a name like Schoenfeldberger it would be too long to get in most newspapers. St. Denis is O. K. for headline purposes. The man who writes the headlines in the newspapers will put it in nine times out of ten.

Miss St. Denis does not look like a dancer. A traveler who prided himself on his ability to guess the occupation of his companions from their dress and mannerisms, sized up the prematurely gray hair and prim figure of Miss St. Denis and offered to bet money that she was "a maiden lady in some dinky town, teaching school five days a week, reading papers on the suppression of cigarette smoking on the sixth day, and teaching a Sunday school class on the seventh."

And this was the young woman from New Jersey who furnished even Jaded New York with thrills and shocked the Rev. Dr. Parkhurst into semi-consciousness.